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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2007

In Today's Papers

Reaction to Turkish Air Raids Continues

All papers report on a TGS statement claiming the targets of Sunday's air operations in northern Iraq were selected "after it was established that they were definitely not civilian residential areas." General Aydogan Babaoglu, who commanded the operation, told mainstream Sabah that the warplanes did not strike civilians and that reports to the contrary are "ill-intentioned."

Papers report that the Iraqi Parliament condemned Turkish operations in northern Iraq.

Iraq summoned the Turkish Ambassador in Baghdad to protest the operation. Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani strongly criticized the Turkish attacks and US support for the air raids, saying the US should "check its morals," while it "defends the sovereignty of Iraq and the Kurdish region, which is under the Americans' responsibilities." The Kurdish region's Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barzani, said the Turkish operations constituted a "hostile act" which "violated Iraq's sovereignty." Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said one woman was killed and four other civilians were injured in the Turkish operations, and urged Ankara to coordinate future cross-border strikes with Iraq to minimize civilian casualties.

Mainstream Hurriyet and Sabah, liberal Radikal and Islamist-oriented Zaman say Turkey's diplomacy regarding the PKK in northern Iraq, was successful. The United States and Russia issued messages of support, while the European Union made a call for restraint. The US said it was informed of the raids in advance, but did not give consent. Papers quote Pentagon Spokesman Bryan Whitman, "the US continues to assist with providing information to the Turkish government that will help them deal with the situation in northern Iraq," however, Whitman declined to say whether US intelligence provided specific targets to the Turks. European Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn's spokeswoman Kristina Nagy said "the EU understands that Turkey has to protect its citizens," stressing,

however, that excessive force should not be used in future operations. Russia's ambassador to Turkey reportedly announced that Russia supports Turkey's fight against terror.

Editorial Commentary on Turkish Raids on Northern Iraq
Mainstream daily Milliyet carried this op-ed: (12/18): "The main result of yesterday's operation is Turkey's psychological supremacy. Because of this surprise military operation, the PKK's operational capabilities were seriously damaged. It is also important to note that this operation was carried out in coordination with the US. It is no secret that some of the intelligence used in this operation was provided by the US. Given this development, Turkish-American military relations have entered into a period of normalization. This operation itself should be considered a tangible result of the most recent Bush-Erdogan summit. Even the EU expressed support for Turkey's right to defend itself. All of this shows that the Turkish government pursued the right approach on the PKK issue. The international community is showing its understanding of the issue, which gives the Turkish government a unique opportunity to find creative solutions. We hope that the AKP government finds ways to initiate a comprehensive solution in a peaceful manner, including legislation for militants to return home."

Okay Gonensin commented in mainstream daily Vatan (12/18): "Military success deserves appreciation, but civilian politicians must complete the equation with political success. Given the current picture, politicians should take steps to minimize the influence of the PKK and provide an open atmosphere in which to discuss the Kurdish problem. If the DTP distances itself from the PKK, its contributions to these discussions can still be useful. Another useful tool to build mutual confidence is to establish relations with the northern Iraqi administration. The PKK realizes that they

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are no longer secure in northern Iraq. Especially at this stage, Turkey's political steps are more important than ever before."

Ertugrul Ozkok commented in mainstream daily Hurriyet (12/18): "The operation served everyone's benefit and came after Turkey won the hearts and minds of the international public concerning the PKK. Turkey also managed to persuade the US, who has also gained hearts and minds in Turkey. Turkey's government, military, and civilians unanimously agree that it is time to find humanitarian solutions to the Kurdish issue. Regardless of what you call it, whether 'amnesty' or 'bringing militants back home,' Turkey should unconditionally embrace everyone who chooses to stay away from blood."

Pro-Kurdish Party Leader Detained on His Return Home
All papers report Nurettin Demirtas, the leader of the pro-Kurdish DTP, was apprehended by police at Ankara's Esenboga Airport Monday evening. Demirtas' return to Ankara followed weeks of speculation that the DTP leader considered remaining in Europe in order to avoid prosecution for fraud in Turkey. His arrest comes after prosecutors brought charges that he falsified a medical report in order to avoid compulsory military service. Prosecutors are seeking a two to five-year prison sentence for the DTP leader, who maintains his innocence. DTP party group Chief Ahmet Turk criticized the detention, saying that Demirtas was not trying to escape prosecution and that Demirtas should have been taken to the prosecutor's office before he was taken into custody by police. Demirtas already served 10 years in prison for being a member of the outlawed PKK. He was elected the leader of the DTP two months ago, replacing the more moderate Ahmet Turk.

Stabbed Priest Franchini Recovering in Izmir
All papers report that the Roman Catholic priest who was stabbed on Sunday, Adriano Franchini, said he feels fine and the attack should "not be exaggerated" or connected to other attacks. Franchini's wounds were not life-threatening. The priest, who leads the Church of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus, was attacked by 19-year-old Ramazan Bay after Sunday's mass at Saint Antoine Church in Izmir. Mainstream Hurriyet says the assault on Franchini was the fourth against Christian clerics in Turkey over the last four years.

TV News:

NTV

Domestic News

- A boat carrying illegal migrants sank near the Aegean tourist town of Bodrum on Monday. So far, eight bodies have been recovered.
- The Turkish General Staff (TGS) said in a statement that Greece was violating the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 and the Paris Treaty of 1947 by arming Rhodes and twelve other Aegean islands "before the eyes of the whole world."
- Eighteen armored vehicles to be handed over to the "Olive Group" Security Company in Baghdad were seized by Turkish officials at the Habur border gate. The vehicles will be sent back to Britain.
- State Minister Mehmet Simsek said the Turkish Central Bank headquarters will be moved to Istanbul from Ankara.

International News

- A key international donors' conference aimed at stabilizing the Palestinian economy opened in Paris Monday. French President Sarkozy opened the conference by calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state by the end of 2008. Foreign Minister Ali Babacan said Turkey will contribute USD 150 million to Palestine's development program over the next three years.

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- Russia began to deliver nuclear fuel to Iran's first nuclear power station on Monday.
- Vladimir Putin has agreed to become Russia's prime minister, a development which comes at the request of his chosen successor, Dmitry Medvedev.
- Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the regional Kurdish government in northern Iraq, said the Kurdish Regional Authority will accept a six-month postponement of the referendum on the future of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

WILSON